5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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received, gossip exchanged, and social and ceremonial obligations discussed in its shade. Here, also, the men of the lineage take their meals, brought out to them from the kitchens of their wives and set before them by their sons, who first attend their fathers and then dine on what remains.

A few paces away is the grinding platform (*nere*) where the women gather to prepare the grain for their families' meals. This great circular mud table, some twenty feet in diameter, is raised about three feet from the ground. Its surface is beaten hard and worked over with cinders and manure to make it rainproof. Each woman has her assigned place at this platform where she keeps her pestle and where she stations herself at dawn and again at dusk to grind her millet and learn the news of the day.

Frequently found at the outer perimeter of the dwelling of the Mossi kin group is the house of the son of a lineage woman who has returned from his father's household to live in the benevolent presence of his mother's family, with whom he enjoys an especially permissive relationship. The house set aside for the residence of the young unmarried men of the lineage is also located on the outer edge of the compound dwelling.

A recent addition to the traditional pattern of village organization described above is the independent households of socially ambitious individuals who have chosen to separate themselves from the residences of their lineages in order to profit from their own economic or religious enterprises. Many have become independently wealthy through successful commercial ventures; others, as a result of conversion to Islam, have gained prestige through religious authority and wealth through the tuition and services provided by the Koranic students. Often these people are much younger than their lineage elders, not in line for the inheritance of political or religious authority through traditional channels, and unwilling either to accept the authority of their seniors or to share economically with the less prosperous members of their lineages. They are deviants, in conflict with the communal patterns of consumption and with the emphasis on accepting established authority which characterizes the traditional social organization of the Mossi.

THE TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

Much agricultural endeavor is necessarily co-operative. Each farmer is dependent on the assistance of his kinsmen to get his fields seeded, cultivated, and harvested in the short time during which each of these operations must take place. However, the yield from his field remains his own, to be shared only with his own wives and children. Members of the lineage also work in the fields under the specific control of the lineage elder. Although the harvest from these fields is stored in the granary [i.e. at a separate shelter in the entrance-way. — Analyst]

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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how important is the conversion of the chiefs, or, at least, their sympathy for our religion, in the spread of Catholicism." The missionaries may have been successful in the village of the Manga district chief because he was sympathetic to them, but they made few converts in the villages far from the district center or in the neighboring districts. In the Béré district, a few miles from Manga, the Catholics have made only 22 converts despite more than 15 years' work. In Manga, however, they were able to "recruit" most of the young children for their church and school. When an old man was asked why his children became Catholic, he tried to evade the question but finally replied that he did not control the minds of his children. Knowing the nature of administrative practice in the upper Volta before 1946, and the nature of Mossi family structure, we looked further for the answer.

Paradoxically, it comes from a Catholic missionary, André Dupont, who, seeking to discover the reason for the decrease of patients in the Catholic-controlled maternity clinics, asked:

> Why have the maternity clinics which in 1942 served more than seventy mothers a month now serve only two or three? "We are no longer forced to go," reply the villagers. Was it the fear of sanction which accounted for the unanimous use of the clinics? Alas! It would seem to be so. The use of force and sanction have rendered odious an institution of charity. It would have been better if the mothers were only encouraged to use the clinics. "These natives do not understand," I am told sometimes. But how does one expect them to understand? (Dupont 1949:4)

Fear was certainly one of the reasons why the people in Manga embraced Catholicism. Before 1946 (the Brazzaville conference in 1944 abolished forced labor), men and women were recruited for work on the roads and on Ivory Coast plantations, and children were recruited for the schools. The district chiefs often gathered orphans and the children of their former serfs and sent them to the mission to fill the quotas, but many children and whole families voluntarily attached themselves to the missions. The reasons for so doing are legion, but in some cases it was simply the desire to accept the new religious faith.

Once at the mission the children were taught French and the tenets of Catholicism. Many of the boys later became catechists or priests and several girls went into the nunnery. However, the largest group of educated youths became the clerical personnel of the administration and were lost to missionary activity. Because the administration lacked French-speaking Mossi, the young people received good jobs. This desertion to the administration has become so serious that the missionaries at Manga have ceased to teach French to their catechists and now use the vernacular.

Conversion to Catholicism, bringing with it the knowledge of French, was formerly one of the sure roads to upward social mobility. Most Catholic teachers at Manga (and at Nobéré) are individuals who were recruited as unwilling school-boys but today are the highest paid members of their lineages. Other gains have accrued to persons who become Catholics. For example, the people at Manga believe that the missionaries used their influence with the

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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797 administration to have one of their converts, a younger son of the late chief, elected to the district chieftainship over his elder brother. This belief is prob- 555 ably unfounded, since the Moro Naba seems to be electing the literate sons of chiefs to their fathers' positions so that educated chiefs, and not educated commoners, can serve as members of French parliamentary bodies. Unfortunately, the people of Manga do not understand modern political problems, and have accepted the new chief only because of their traditional respect for the chieftainship.

634 The conversion of the Manga chief to Catholicism has not engendered many problems for his pagan subjects. The chief's primary duty—to begin 797 the yearly ceremonial cycle of sacrifices to the ancestors—has been taken over 769 by his father's brother, who is now considered the ritual head of the chiefly [602] lineage. Nevertheless, to the chief still accrue the gains of this ceremony because his followers pay him homage and bring him gifts on his birthday, which comes at this period. Moslems in the community also pay their respects at this time, and they prefer his Catholic birthday celebration to the bloody sacrifices of chickens to the ancestors. On the other hand, the chief shows little of the common Catholic disapproval of Moslems and sends gifts to their leaders on the Moslem feast days. He also entertains the district Moslems when they come to pay him homage.

797 The Catholic chief does not act as a pivot in the exchange of wives be- 634 tween pagans of his lineage and the other lineages. This task now falls to his 582 father's brothers. Nevertheless, as district chief he is constantly involved with the marital problems involving pagan parents and their Catholic children. The main source of the difficulty is that Catholic girls are encouraged to refuse to join their pagan husbands when so ordered by their parents. The mission not only insists that the girl freely choose her own husband, but encourages her to reject a polygynous union. Catholicism thereby interposes it- [562] self between the girls and their society, not only impairing the prestige of their fathers and lineages but also giving the girls more freedom than they would ordinarily possess.

The pagans claim that by encouraging girls to choose mates without parental consent, the Catholics are really taking the opportunity to obtain wives for young Catholic men. Paradoxically, there seems to be some truth in this, since Bouniol, a White Father, states:

> A Mossi who is unable to acquire a wife by [traditional] means must either remain unmarried or seduce another man's wife . . . they must choose between celibacy and immorality.
>
> Such a state of affairs creates many problems for the missions, especially as the system is recognized and sanctioned by the colonial authorities. . . . Young native Christians are obviously placed in a very awkward position. Their conversion angers their parents, who refuse to give them a wife; neither will their friends bestow a daughter upon them, because they know that they will not receive one in return, since a Christian may not give a daughter in marriage to a pagan. . . . *Consequently, unless the missionaries help them to find a wife, they must remain unmarried—a very discouraging prospect!* (1920:160 italics mine)

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643 636 We Mossi cannot say that the Europeans have introduced chieftainship among us; for we are old hands at it. Chieftainship has always existed among us, and we intend to conserve it in spite of anything one may say about it.

Who better than we chiefs can hope for a rapid evolution of our country? However, because of the pride we have [185] in the organized society that we have known well before French occupation, we wish this evolution to take place within our specific cultural pattern, to harmonize with, and to take into consideration the wisdom which has permitted us to conserve the integrity of our homeland until French occupation.

Without wishing to place ourselves against the demands of those who are wedded to an overthrow of local traditions, we endeavor to state our position clearly: Let everyone scratch whatever itches him.[8]

643 178 It is too early to predict what will be the fate of the traditional Mossi chiefs. The factors which made for such weaknesses in their political system—hazardous interregnums and flexibility in succession—have certainly ceased to operate. But, as I have shown, by a curious coincidence, a form of succession which evolved to meet a particular set of circumstances served the Mossi in good stead during French occupation, and is now being adapted to serve the needs of a new political environment. This flexibility in succession may even provide the Mossi with a wide enough choice of candidates to preserve the traditional ruling lineages in the face of a changing political system. Furthermore, this flexibility in political succession appears to be more compatible and less in conflict with the principles of universal suffrage which have been introduced in this society to serve the needs of the developing parliamentary system.

The growing use of Mossi traditional chiefs as modern politicians has not precluded the opportunity of Mossi commoners to take part in the governmental organization of the territory in which their group resides. As a matter of fact, there are a number of commoners who [565] are well educated, and individually have held high administrative offices. However, despite a number of them who have been critical of the traditional ruling hierarchy, they have not succeeded in breaking the strong hold of the traditional ruling lineage on the people. Some commoners have even found it to their advantage to ally themselves